

Minutes

January 23, 2018

Veterans Policy Advisory Committee

A meeting of the Veterans Policy Advisory Committee (VPAC) convened at 11:00 AM at the Columbia Chamber of Commerce.

A notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The following members were present:

William L. (Bill) Bethea, Jr. (Chairman), Major General (Ret) George Goldsmith, Col (Ret) Barringer F. Wingard, Jr., Major General Van McCarty, Lt General (Ret) Jack Klimp, Senator Thomas McElveen, John Magill (Director, SC Dept of Mental Health), and Todd Humphries (Ex Officio, President, SC Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers).

Guests attending were Tom Robillard (MOAA VP for Legislative Affairs), Susan McPherson (Columbia Chamber of Commerce), Marlin Bodison (SC Dept of Employment and Workforce), Stanley Foreman (SC Veterans Affairs), TerryLynn DiChiara (SC Veterans Affairs), Charlie Farrell (Executive Coordinator, SC Military Base Task Force), Haidee Stith (SC Military Base Task Force), and Sandy Claypoole (Program Manager, SC Military Base Task Force).

Bill Bethea called the meeting to order. No members of the press were in attendance.

The minutes from the November 21st meeting were approved.

Jack Klimp

Review and Prioritize Needs for Veterans 2018

The SC Veterans Policy Advisory Committee's (VPAC) mission is to analyze contributions and needs of veterans, make policy recommendations and to report to the Governor through the Military Base Task Force (MBTF). The following issues and opportunities were taken from the presentations of 2017 and prioritized by the VPAC members to determine what will be pursued by the MBTF. Items 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15 have more than one issue listed because those issues received the same score when prioritized.

1. Obtain an accurate count of the number of veterans in the state.
2. Develop program to convince transitioning service members to remain in the state.
3. Inventory state agencies that serve veterans.
4. Links on Veterans Administration website to SCDMH veteran resources, including links to SCDMH's three current VA state homes.
5. Construct three additional VA state homes.

6. Dissolve the SC Division of Veterans Affairs and create a SC Department of Veterans Affairs.
Increase communications to all veterans.
Access granted for SCDMH to VA eligibility system to determine veteran benefit status.
7. Coordinate those agencies that help veterans with employment opportunities.
Investigate possible change to tax exemption for spouses if service member dies from service connected disability.
Inform veterans that if they receive a solicitation from a charity or professional fundraiser and they have concerns about that organization to notify the Secretary of State's office.
8. Provide Director of Veterans Affairs increased authority over county Veterans Affairs Officers.
9. Notify VSOs (Veterans Service Organizations) of filing requirements for charitable registration and annual financial reports.
Revise the current legislation covering the appointment of the county Veterans Affairs Officer from a two-year appointment to a four-year appointment.
10. Raise public awareness about VSO fraud.
Expand use of VA Telehealth technology.
11. Better vet VSOs to assist the Secretary of State.
Strengthen state Veterans Affairs Office.
12. Inventory VSOs.
13. Enhance technology for County Veterans Affairs Officers.
14. Recruitment/outreach efforts to veterans by SCDMH to support SCDMH workforce development with possible partnership with programs such as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).
15. Create a central clearing house that advertises and coordinates all the veteran support resources in the state.
Advocate for leeway in use of vehicles for county Veterans Affairs Officers.
Increase awareness of DAODAS (Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services).
16. Provide more state funds for county Veterans Affairs Offices to be used for certification and recertification training, and to purchase needed equipment.

The following pending legislation was discussed:

SC Give Back to Veterans Act (S 62 & H 3104)

In-State Tuition for Veterans (H 3035)

County Veterans Affairs Officers (H 3428)

Compliance with the SC Uniform Voters Act (H 3685)

SC Service Members Civil Relief Act (H 3919)

Homeowners' Association Regime Fees Fairness to Deployed Service Members (H 3010)

Deferred Payment of Property Taxes for Deployed Military (H 3106)

Drone Restrictions Near Military Bases (S 109)

Tuition Rates for Veterans (S 531)

Bill Bethea stated that by exempting state tax on military retirement pay, we will attract quality people to the workforce in South Carolina that are needed to keep big businesses, such as Volvo, up and running. REMI studies show that in a period of 3 to 5 years after exempting state tax on military retirement pay, the negative income would turn positive for SC.

There was discussion about how to determine the actual number of veterans in SC and the impact a larger number of veterans would have on services provided.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 13, 2018.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Claypoole